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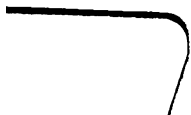
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AN
ORIGINAL ESSAY
ON
MEMORY.

By JACOB STANLEY.

"Keep in Memory."---St. Paul.

*"Memory is the primary and fundamental power, without which there
"could be no other intellectual operation."---Dr. Johnson.*

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PREFACE.

WHY did J. S. write an Essay on Memory? Or having written it, why does he publish it? These are questions which are likely enough to arise in the minds of those who love to pry into the secret springs of human actions; questions, which, though they originate in curiosity, are very innocent, and therefore shall be answered.

J. S. belongs to a respectable *Reading Society* in Bristol, whose members are required to furnish in turn, an original essay, on a subject previously given by the Society. This Essay is read at their Monthly Meeting, which is held in regular succession at each other's houses. The subject assigned to J. S. was "Memory;" one which, had the selection been left to himself, he most certainly would not have chosen: but he had too much respect for the Society to

be disobedient. Besides, he considered a *good memory* a very good and desirable thing; and though he had often great cause to lament the feebleness and treachery of his own, yet he saw, or thought he saw, how a bad one might be made better, and how a good one might be improved. Considering memory to be an important faculty of the human mind, he thought that should he succeed in assisting it, though only in two or three cases, the time occupied in preparing the Essay would not be employed in vain.

But why publish it? *Partly*, because the Society *unanimously* requested its publication, and who was J. S. that he should exalt *his* judgment against *theirs*? It no more became him to “bandy civilities” with them, than Dr. Johnson with his late Majesty. Whether *vox populi vox Dei*, be true or false, J. S. does not hesitate to avow that he pays great deference to the judgment of the members of the “Reading Society.”—And, *partly*, for the same reason which induced him to write. By *writing* he hoped to assist the memory in one or two cases, by *publishing* he hopes to assist it in many

more. In this he *may* possibly be disappointed;—(for what author has not been disappointed!)—but *possibly* he may *not*. He wishes to serve his generation, and therefore casts this mite, small as it is, into the treasury.

Perhaps the familiarity observable in the Introductory Lines, as also in some parts of the Essay, may to strangers require an apology. The only apology J. S. has to offer is, that the members of the “Reading Society” are on very good terms with each other;—that he is of opinion there is no impropriety in enlivening a dry subject with a few sallies of harmless pleasantry;—that every man has his way, and such is his;—and that, whilst he hates levity and foolish jesting, he is a friend to innocent cheerfulness, and feels great pleasure in promoting it. He might, indeed, in publishing, have omitted those passages, but he questioned whether he was at liberty to do so. He was requested to publish the Essay as it *now* is; and how can he be sure that, had it been *different*, such a request would have been preferred? Such as it is, he commits it to the candour of the public, who, after all that an

author may think proper to say, will judge of the propriety or impropriety of publication, and will pronounce an unbought verdict on its character.

BRISTOL, *August 30th*, 1824.

AN
ORIGINAL ESSAY,
&c.

INTRODUCTORY LINES.

WHILE I of MEMORY read,
Let me entreat your patience and your candour ;
Should I be *prolix*, don't remember *that* ;
Or too *concise*, trace it to taste *laconic*,
But not to mental obscurity :
Review attentively the part, and should
The sentiment be worth remembering,
Then lodge it in the great repository.
Should arguments seem weak, and wit obtuse,
And stile unclassical, and figures bald,
And the whole piece receive the touch of *Somnus* ;
Ev'n then, let me conjure you—*All be patient* ;—
Yea thankful, for 'twill save a sleeping draught,
And send you safely to the land of Nod,
Where in sweet reverie, you'll all forget
The *Original Essay on the Memory*.

MEMORY is that faculty of the mind which receives and treasures up the images or ideas of those things which have in any way come under our observation. It is the general repository

of what we have seen and heard, and thought and experienced;—the great storehouse of good and bad—of the useful and the injurious—of poison and medicine—of those things which deteriorate, and those which improve and elevate the human character. A capacious memory is either a blessing or a curse to the individual who possesses it, and may be so to those also who are within the sphere of his influence; inasmuch as it may contain ample materials directly tending to deprave the heart; or those which, under the divine blessing, operate as medicine on that depravity, gradually diminishing its strength and its virulence, and never ceasing to act, till the moral venom is entirely expelled, and the whole soul is sanctified through the belief and internal operation of the truth.

But this power or faculty, like the other powers of the soul, whether intellectual or sentient, is exceedingly various in different persons. The memories of some persons resemble a riddle, whose perforations are numerous and large, and which retains nothing but a few large bodies; others resemble a fine sieve, through which only the more subtile particles escape; whilst a few, a *favoured* few, resemble an oil-skin, which being impervious, retains all its contents, and suffers nothing to depart. But though there are these varieties in this faculty, yet I conceive it per-

fectly possible for a bad memory to be much improved. The perforations in the riddle may be considerably reduced, both in number and in size; and the texture of the sieve may be so thickened, as that thousands of those particles which in its former state of attenuity would have escaped, shall be retained for ever.

The varieties of memory may all be included under the following terms;—*quick, slow, transient, permanent, partial, and universal.*

The person who possesses a *quick* memory, receives the image on the slightest possible touch. He sees and he remembers—he hears and he remembers—he thinks or feels and he remembers. His memory, like the retina of the eye, has the image painted upon it without any painful effort. Nor does this quickness of memory extend to a piece of striking wit, to an interesting anecdote, to an important fact in history or in science, or to a short poetical stanza; but to an entire argument at the bar, or a speech in the senate, or a sermon in the pulpit: and all this it receives, not in substance only, but with verbal correctness; whilst it also accurately retains the very emphasis, and gesticulations and tones of the speaker. I once knew a minister who possessed such a quickness of memory that, after *twice* reading one or even *two* discourses on the Saturday, and discourses

too not of his own composition, he could deliver them correctly to his congregation the following day.*

But such quickness of memory falls to the lot only of a favoured few: the great bulk of society, not excepting even the more intellectual part of it, generally lament the *dulness* and *slowness* of their memory. It is not a slight touch from the seal which leaves any impression on them. It must be repeated with great force; the wax must be heated again and again, and the seal again and again applied, or its image will not be visible. Richly to store a memory of this character appears so difficult, that comparatively few are found to make the attempt. Indeed none ever would make it unless influenced by some very powerful motive. The effort necessary richly to store such a memory is so herculean, that unless animated by an ardent thirst for knowledge, or by ambition to excel, or by the love of fame, or the hope of profit, or the desire of extensive usefulness, or by some other equally impelling principle, no one would ever be found to make it.

But impressions made on the memory are not

* Scaliger reports of himself, that, in his youth, he could repeat above one hundred verses, having once read them; and Barthicus declares, that he wrote his *Comment upon Claudian* without consulting the text.

in all cases abiding. In some they are merely *transient*. Like impressions on the sand, they are perfectly evanescent—the wind passeth over them and they are gone. And this is more frequently the case with the *quick* than the *slow* memory. There is quickness but not tenacity; a readiness to receive the impression, but no power to retain it. The wax being in too liquid a state when the seal is taken off, if touched by any thing, the distinct figures are destroyed, and nothing is discernible but broken fragments of something which cannot be decyphered. Perhaps there is not one to whom I am now reading this paper, who in reference to some subjects at least, has not reason to lament the *transient* and untenacious character of his memory. Even men of the largest intellectual stores regret this. It is said that the great Sergeant Maynard once observed, when a young barrister in his argument affected great legal knowledge, that *he had forgotten more law than the learned gentleman had ever known*. But for want of tenacity, what a multitude of rich and valuable materials would the memory of a man of respectable intellectual powers contain, who has for twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years been a constant reader, a close and profound thinker, and a diligent observer of every thing within his reach. The nutriment which the activities

of his mind would have extracted from these materials for thought, would have made him an intellectual giant, in comparison of whom, Johnson, that intellectual prodigy, would have been a mere pigmy.

There are however some memories which are comparatively *permanent* in retaining the impressions made upon them. The figures, instead of being imprinted on the shore, which the first wave washes away; or on the sand, which the gentle zephyr removes; or on any body in too liquid a state to retain them in all their prominence and distinctness, are, as it were, *graven in the rock for ever*. What they know once, they know always. And should those memories come in close contact with science and history and the Bible, they will be living and walking Encyclopædias and Concordances. The rise and fall of empires, the antient landmarks of kingdoms, the philosophers, and poets, and legislators, and statesmen, and heroes of antiquity, are to them as correctly known as the events of our own time. Neither distance of time nor place at all weakens the impression, or dims the figures, but they continue to exhibit a perfect fac-simile of their prototypes. Such a memory is a treasure; and the man who possesses it, if associated with a sound judgment, a good heart, agreeable manners, and a cheerful

loquacity, is one whose society can never be too highly prized.

Some memories seem only *partially* susceptible. A sort of capriciousness appears to attend them. Like some weak stomachs, which readily receive some things, but violently reject others; or like the heated metal on which waters will not remain;—or like some particular earths which are suited only to particular seeds,—so those memories are susceptible only of a certain class of impressions. Let a person of such a memory hear a sermon, for instance, and he remembers nothing; let him hear a play, and he can tell you much. Let him read a work on ethics or divinity, and scarcely a single idea will be transferred to the great depository; but let him read one of a licentious and demoralizing character, and a multitude will instantly be introduced, which will place themselves in the most prominent situation for the imagination to mould and fashion according to its own will. Perhaps in most if not in every memory there is a greater susceptibility of impression on some subjects than on others; but where there is an absolute resistance to impression on some subjects, and a quickness to receive others, the difference must not be accounted for by any supposed defect in the memory, but must rather be traced to some strong bias in the heart.

But whilst some are very partially susceptible, others catch impressions from almost *every object*. Whether they visit the theatre or the chapel, the senate or the court, they can with great readiness and accuracy describe both what they have seen and heard. On their memories are printed, and with almost equal ease, the notes of music, the figures of geometry, and the characters and words of various languages. Subjects essentially different and opposite in their nature are alike remembered. Truth and fiction, works of dry argumentation, and works of the most splendid and fascinating imagination alike leave their impress. The canvass is spread, and receives and faithfully records the image of every object which passes over it.

Such is the variety of memories which has come under my notice. *Fully* to account for this variety is a task which I shall not presume to undertake. I will, however, with great modesty, offer a few observations which will, I trust, throw some light on this interesting subject.

We have already assumed, that the memory in different persons possesses different degrees of susceptibility and tenacity; and that this difference is radical, and not the effect of effort, or education, or discipline. In what this difference originates, whether in the mind itself, or

in some physical defect, arising from its connection with matter, is a question which I leave to be solved by those metaphysicians who are intimately conversant with occult causes; and to whom the laws of matter and spirit, with their reciprocal operation upon each other, are as simple and easy as the multiplication table. But whilst I admit the difference, I by no means admit that the *slow* memory must necessarily continue such;—nor the *quick* one be untenacious and transient;—nor the *partial* one be incapable of receiving general impressions;—but on the contrary I believe each of these may be greatly improved.

The principal impediments which operate against the improvement of this faculty are—want of attention, want of knowledge, want of interest, and want of method.

Except where the memory possesses a peculiar susceptibility of impression, nothing can be committed to it without effort, and, in some cases, without long continued effort. It is not an ordinary degree of attention which will carry off even a complete outline of a discourse of tolerable length, much less that outline entirely filled up with the arguments and illustrations and inferences of the speaker;—no, the attention must be intense, and undivided, and continuous: and there must, as the speaker proceeds,

occasionally be a throwing back of the thoughts to the more prominent parts on which the others depend—to the key-stone which supports the whole arch. For should the great outline or any essential part of it be lost, it will be utterly impossible to bring away the picture which the mind has contemplated. There will be a distinct remembrance of some parts, but nothing will be consecutive and proportionate. The picture, wanting some of its essential features, would resemble a man without legs, or with legs and no arms, or with a body without a head, or a head without a body. But let the entire outline be deeply indented in the memory, and in general the filling up will also be tolerably well remembered.

Effort, and repeated effort, is also essentially necessary to the faithful copying of what we read, upon the tablet of memory. It is not once nor twice reading an essay or a poem regularly through, which will make it *verbally* our own. No; it will be found necessary to divide it into several parts, and to bend the whole attention to these parts in regular succession, never proceeding to the second till the first is clearly imprinted, nor to the third till the second, and so on. And when it is all thus committed, then review the whole, and repeat it consecutively two or three times. Let this

be done before retiring to rest at night, and in the morning let it be repeated again, and the probability is that it will not be soon forgotten.

Should the memory be habitually exercised, but not strained—employed, but not crowded and overloaded—its susceptibilities of impression will be quickened, and its power of retention strengthened. The exercise of this, like that of any other power, whether corporeal or mental, will, if not immoderate, increase its strength and perfection; but should it be immoderately exercised, and an effort made to imprint too much upon it, not only will it occasion indistinctness and confusion, but will also greatly impair it in its aptitude to receive impressions, and in its power of retaining them. Temperance here, as in every thing else, is best.

Between the memory and the understanding there is an intimate connection; hence what we understand we can far more readily remember than what we do not. Let, for example, a passage be read or heard in a language to which the individual is a stranger, and the probability is that he will not remember two words of it: but let the same passage be translated into his vernacular tongue, and if it be short he will remember every word. Even literary men and men of science, whose memories are

the most faithful records of subjects which they understand, on others with which they are less acquainted, or not acquainted at all, they are most inaccurate and faithless ones. Our public reporters of Parliamentary debates, for instance, can narrate the speeches of senators with an accuracy which astonishes, when it is remembered that their short-hand notes contain little more than an outline of those speeches, and that the filling-up is from memory. Yet those very reporters, when employed in taking down sermons or speeches on religious subjects, frequently blunder most egregiously, and make the speaker utter sentiments which cannot be harmonized with the analogy of faith, and which are completely at variance with his own theological creed. In one case his memory is a faithful mirror, in the other it is a defective one; and the reason of the difference lies here—in the former the memory is aided by the *understanding*; in the latter it is not. The gentlemen alluded to, understand a political argument, but they are ignorant of religion. Did they know the latter as well as the former, they would report as correctly in the one case as in the other. If therefore we would with ease imprint any thing upon our memory, let us first labour to understand it.

But the heart is, of all auxiliaries of memory,

the *most* powerful. Let this be deeply interested in any subject, and it will never be forgotten. Who ever forgot the things which gave him exquisite pleasure or pain; which were the objects of his ardent desire or his fixed aversion; his sanguine hope or his fearful apprehension? These make an impression which time itself *cannot* obliterate; and which, after ten thousand other impressions have been made, remain unmutilated, with all their original connections and associations. When the heart conveys the idea to the memory, it impresses it with such force, that it sinks to such a depth as, in the language of inspiration, to *hide it*, or secure it from injury by the winds or the rains or the dust or the friction of succeeding events and years. Nothing effaces it. Other impressions, in which the heart was not interested, are evanescent, and pass away in rapid succession; but these, like *the word of the Lord, abide for ever*. St. Paul never forgot the things he saw and heard in the third heavens, nor the *thorn in the flesh* which succeeded that extraordinary vision. Luther never forgot his successful attack on the mother of harlots—that great sorceress, whose magic spell he broke, and from whose enchantment he rescued multitudes; nor has that mother ever forgotten the rude and ungallant manner in which he exposed

her before the whole world, by washing the paint from her face.—by knocking her teeth down her throat,—by tearing away the pads which bolstered up deformity,—and by turning aside the scarlet robe with which she was covered, and discovering the filth and rags of her under-garments, which were thickly peopled with one of the plagues of Egypt. No, she will never forget this. Her children indeed have been trying for ages to make her appear as beautiful as before, but have not been able to succeed. The paint wont adhere; the teeth, by the most skilful dentists, have not yet been fastened; her crookedness, by all the ingenuity of her dress-makers, cannot be made straight; and that part of the cloak which Luther turned aside they cannot again make to sit close; but, in spite of them, the Egyptian plague appears in all its original rifeness.

Wesley never forgot his interview with Peter Bohler, nor the effects of his ministry in Moorfields, and Kennington-common, and Kingswood, and Newcastle, and many other places. Wellington will never forget Waterloo; nor, had Buona-partte lived, would he ever have forgotten Moscow, and Elba, and St. Helena. That which powerfully excites the passions and deeply interests the heart, produces an impression which becomes co-existent with our being, and which

it is not in the power of place, or person, or circumstance, or time, to obliterate.

There are however many things which do not very *deeply*, perhaps scarcely *at all*, interest the heart, that are most distinctly remembered; and this too by persons whose memories are not quickly susceptible of impression, but which have great dulness and tardiness about them. This is accomplished by certain artificial methods. Some persons, when they particularly wish to remember something which they purpose to do, lest they should forget it, tie a thread round one of their fingers, or hang something upon one of their buttons, or the married lady removes the ring to another finger, &c. by which means the attention is easily conducted to the desired object of reminiscence.

But of all the artificial methods of assisting the memory, there is perhaps none so important and successful as *association*. Association of *sound* will conduct some persons through a vast variety of subjects which have no natural connection with each other. Of this the late William Huntington, generally known by the name of the *Coal-heaver*,—a man remarkable for the strength of his memory, the weakness of his judgment, the censoriousness of his spirit, the dogmatism of his manner, and the Billingsgate-like stile of his eloquence—was a remarkable

example. The word righteousness, for instance, would instantly raise into prominence on the tablet of his memory almost every text in the Bible in which that word occurred; though many of these might have no more connection with each other than *beau Nash*, the late Master of the Ceremonies at Bath, and *gnashing of teeth*. This kind of association greatly assists the memory in all poetry except blank verse. If the subject of the verse be remembered generally, and the final words of the first and second lines of common metre, for instance, be *distinctly* remembered, it will seldom be very difficult to recollect the third and fourth terminations; and having recovered these, the intermediate parts will easily be filled up. Take, for example, the following verse,

“ The opening heavens around me shine
With beams of sacred bliss ;
If Jesus shew his mercy mine,
And whisper I am his.”

If the subject of the verse and the terminating words either of the first and second lines—*shine* and *bliss*, or of the third and fourth—*mine* and *his*, be remembered, the corresponding terminations will easily be caught, and having recovered these, a few efforts will generally bring back the rest.

Associating persons and things with particular objects in nature, or offices in society, or branches of science, &c. will frequently much assist memory. I want to impress upon my memory a gentleman to whom I had been introduced of the name of *Green*, and I instantly join him to a green field;—or of the name of *Black*, and I link him to a funeral;—or *Hill*, and I place him on the top of a mountain;—or *Hall*, and I give him a seat in a large room, at the head of a table covered with the profusion of antient hospitality;—or *Bishop*, and I put a crozier in his hand, and a mitre on his head;—or *King*, and I seat him on a throne, and crown him;—or *Parson*, and I give him a surplice;—or *Pope*, and I think of the vicegerent of the prince of darkness at Rome;*—or *Moore*, and I plant him on a common;—or *Hare*, and on the moor I set him a running. And, by the way,

* The papists call the pope the vicegerent of *Christ*, but on this subject doctors disagree. If to interdict what Christ commands,—to teach what Christ forbids,—to manifest a spirit directly contrary to the spirit of Christ,—and to propagate a system which bears no resemblance to the Christianity of the New Testament;—if these, and things like these, are the essential constituents of the vicegerent of Christ, then of all men who bear the Christian name upon earth, the *pope* has the first claim to that high title. Christ says, search the Scriptures; the pope prohibits their circulation, and, except in special cases, forbids the laity to read them. Christ teaches the defectiveness of human virtue, and the imperfection of the best performances of the best of men, and

such is the power of association, that the last two names have brought to my recollection an epigram in which they both occur;—

A wonder, Sir, let me declare,
The *Moore* is running on the *Hare*;
The *Hare* has oft run on the *Moore*,
But *Moore* ne'er ran on *Hare* before.

The greater the number of subjects with which an idea is associated, the greater is the probability that we shall remember it. An angler who has twenty hooks is more likely to succeed in catching fish than he who has but one.

Associating things according to their relation to each other is also greatly assistant to memory.

commands his disciples when they have done all to say, *We are unprofitable servants*; the pope teaches that men may perform more than is required of them, and instead of being *unprofitable* servants, may have a large surplus of good works—a long catalogue of *works of supererogation*. The spirit of Christ was always in accordance with his own declaration—I came not to destroy men's lives but to save them; the spirit of popery is the spirit of destruction. It scatters firebrands, arrows, and death among all who will not worship the beast. It denounces all heretics, alias Protestants; and were its power equal to its ferocious malignity, it would, after giving them a taste of the delicious pleasures of the Inquisition, sweep them universally from the face of the earth. Christ taught a pure and spiritual worship, through himself, the only Mediator; the pope has established a system of idolatry, abounding in image and saint and angel-worship, with almost as many puerilities and absurdities and vile trumperies as ever debased the lowest grades of heathenism. Between Christ and the pope—I speak of what the office includes—there is as perfect a resemblance as between darkness and light, pomp and humility, a beast of prey and an innocent lamb.

This is especially necessary in recollecting sermons, or speeches, or debates, or dissertations. Supposing these to be consecutively arranged, it will be generally easy, if we get hold of one link in the chain, to go back to the preceding, or forward to succeeding ones. And, should there be little method observed, if we be attentive to the *order of things*, we shall not feel it a very difficult task to reduce the chaotic mass to some regularity, and by a mental operation of our own to classify the different topics, and link them together as *that* order may require. Nothing helps the memory better than *clearness of arrangement*. "I don't know, (said a gentleman to the late Rev. Andrew Fuller,) how it is that I can remember your sermons better than those of any other minister, but such is the fact." "I cannot tell, (replied Mr. Fuller) unless it be owing to simplicity of arrangement; I pay particular attention to this part of composition, always placing things together that are related to each other, and that naturally follow each other in succession. For instance, (added he) suppose I were to say to my servant, 'Betty, you must go and buy some butter, and starch, and cream, and soap, and tea, and blue, and sugar, and cakes.'—Betty would say, 'Loh, Master! I shall never be able to remember all these.' But suppose I were to say, 'Betty, you know your mistress is going to have some

friends to tea to-morrow, and that you are going to wash the day following; and that for the tea-party you will want tea, and sugar, and cream, and cakes, and butter; and for the washing you will want soap, and starch, and blue;—Betty would instantly reply, ‘Yes, master, I can remember them all very well.’

The cultivation of memory is important to all, for without it the ordinary and every-day transactions of men would be in a state of perpetual confusion; but it is *particularly* important to those whose situation in society requires them frequently to address public assemblies. Should this faculty in these be remarkably defective, there will be frequent chasms in their speeches or orations, which will not only mar their beauty, but envelope them in a mental mist, and greatly weaken their impression. The omission of a single fact, for instance, in the examination of a witness, or argument in the speech of a barrister, might lead to a verdict directly contrary to that which the statement of that fact or argument would have produced. However important the facts, or sound the arguments, or rich and chaste the imagery with which a speech may abound, should the memory prove faithless, these will all appear in chaotic disorder. The mind of the orator will be thrown into confusion, and illustrations, and arguments and facts will become a heterogenous mass of

ruins; and in vain will he attempt, by loud and animated declamation, or by vehement action, or by any other of those arts to which orators in a season of difficulty are wont to resort, to conceal the catastrophe, or to re-edify that which a faithless memory had demolished. The parts must be separated, and re-arranged, and the mind must submit to a process little less laborious than that of original composition.

How *far* the memory ought to be employed in public addresses, is a question of some difficulty, the solution of which must depend partly upon the speaker's acquaintance with his subject,—partly upon the degree of facility with which he can appropriately clothe his ideas,—and partly upon his constitutional diffidence or confidence. Should he deliver an address on a subject with which he is but superficially acquainted, in the presence of an assembly of which he is afraid, and by whom he finds the powers of his mind paralyzed,—and should the subject require great accuracy of statement, it will be necessary that he not only commit to memory its leading topics, or a meagre outline of its plan, but also almost all its important facts and arguments. But should he possess an intimate acquaintance with *that* on which he is going to speak,—should it be a topic on which his mind has been accustomed to dwell, and with which it is perfectly familiar, then it is not

necessary that his mind should be burdened with any particular arguments, or with any particular arrangement of words; for, if possessed of but the lowest degree of eloquence essential to a public speaker, his intimate knowledge of the subject in all its bearings will furnish him as he proceeds, with arguments and language sufficiently appropriate for its illustration. The late Dr. Priestly once said to the late Rev. John Hampson, "Sir, how is it that you can preach extemporary?" "You know, Doctor, (replied Mr. Hampson) that I believe in divine inspiration." "Poh, poh, (rejoined the Doctor) that won't do: I suppose you mean to say, that were I as well acquainted with divinity, as I am with natural philosophy, I could preach extemporary too." The Doctor had just been entertaining Mr. Hampson and some other philosophical friends with an extemporary lecture on some branch of natural philosophy.

In general, if I may venture an opinion on such a subject, I would say, that a public speaker, and especially that a christian preacher should not load his memory with the whole of what he intends to deliver. Such a method lays an interdict on all the other faculties of the mind during the period of delivery. It locks up all the powers of invention; and should the heart of the speaker, or rather of the mere repeater of his theme, be warmed in the progress

of the discourse, the richness of remark and illustration which that warmth would originate, must all be rejected. He has bound himself to a particular path, and whatever fruits or flowers may present themselves to his view on the right hand or on the left, he dare not step out of it lest he should never be able to find it again. But, whilst he should not employ his memory *only*, to the exclusion of the other powers of his mind, neither ought he to employ these powers to the exclusion of memory. There is a middle course; let the memory be entrusted with the general outline; this will in most cases secure method;—but let the heart and the judgment and the imagination be chiefly employed in the filling up. Such discourses will generally come with a warmth and freshness to the hearts of the hearers, and will produce such effects upon them as are rarely, if ever, the accompaniments of a parrot-like repetition of a precomposed discourse.

It may perhaps appear strange that among the various methods suggested for the improvement of this faculty, I have said nothing of one to which many have attached great importance, namely, *writing what we wish to remember*. My reason for the omission is simply this,—I greatly question whether such a process much, if at all, assists the memory. As far as my experience and observation go, this method has

seldom, if ever, compensated for the expenditure of time which it requires; and that few, if any, of the best memories which have come under my notice, have been at all aided by it. In original composition indeed, to set down our thoughts is, in most cases, absolutely necessary, that we may secure and afterwards revise them. Unless noted down, some of them would probably escape; and the perspicuity, or force, or point, or elegance of the paragraph would be lost, and the general argument weakened. Besides, in a series of thoughts when committed to writing, and submitted to the eye, we sometimes discover defects in stile, or argument, or illustration, which in the simple operation of intellect we had not observed. But though it is advantageous to *write our own thoughts*, for the reasons just stated, it is a very different thing to *re-write the thoughts of others*,—thoughts which are already before our eyes. How can the act of *transcribing*, more powerfully impress the memory than the act of *reading*? Are not the eyes, rather than the fingers, the instruments which convey the ideas to the memory? If indeed by transcribing, any one can fix his attention more intensely on a subject, in that case writing may be employed as an auxiliary of memory; but in most cases, if I am not deceived, writing, instead of aiding the attention, distracts it, and renders the process of writing

on the memory a very slow one. By the time that one man has transcribed the piece on paper, another without the aid of either pen or pencil, by merely casting his eyes over it a few times, has made it entirely his own. The one transfers it to his common-place book, and the other to the great intellectual depository.

Memory, like every other gift of God, may promote our own happiness and that of others, or it may be subversive of both. If it be the depository of purifying truth it will promote our salvation and happiness; if the receptacle of infidelity and licentiousness it will increase the natural depravity of the human heart, from whence will issue morally pestilential streams, which will sweep away every virtuous principle, and carry devastation and death in all their progress.

A good memory may also aid or retard the progress of intellect. If we employ it as a substitute for thinking, our intellectual powers will remain in a perfectly dwarfish state. Persons of this description can tell you readily enough what this author and the other speaker says. but they themselves have no opinion, and are utterly incapable of rational discussion. They have abundance of food in the stomach, but not an ounce of it is reduced to chyle; and the load thus indigested instead of promoting the health of the system, only tends to injure and

weaken it. But if memory be employed as an auxiliary to thought, and not as its substitute, it will feed the understanding, and invigorate and strengthen and embellish the whole of our intellectual nature.

But *I* must remember that this is an essay, and not a volume;—that in this worn-out age of the world all hearers are not blest with the patience of Job;—that tea is ready to be served up, and that every moment occupied upon this dry subject, is a moment deducted from free, and unshackled, and rational conversation;—and that should my Essay on Memory be protracted to a greater length, it, even *it*, will all be forgotten. Remembering all this, I conclude by wishing, if such a thing be possible, that all present may have such a memory as will retain every thing that is good, and forget every thing that is bad;—

A memory that with great volcanic throe,
Ejects the poisonous matter it contains,
And sends it streaming from its heart and head,
To place too distant ever to return.
Or, like a garden, once o'errun with weeds,
Be cleans'd from all, and henceforth richly sown
With choicest seeds, such as shall soon spring up,
And quickly bring forth fruit an hundred fold.

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